

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions of the claims in the application.

1-44. (canceled)

45. (previously presented): A vector comprising the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:6, or a nucleotide sequence having at least about 90% sequence identity to the sequence of SEQ ID NO:6, wherein said vector is capable of expressing a fusion protein that comprises a native HCV epitope and elicits an immunological response against HCV.

46-68. (canceled)

69. (previously presented): An immunogenic composition comprising a nucleic acid molecule comprising the nucleotide sequence displayed in SEQ ID NO:6, or a nucleotide sequence having at least about 90% sequence identity to the sequence of SEQ ID NO:6, wherein said nucleic acid molecule is capable of expressing a fusion protein that comprises a native HCV epitope and elicits an immunological response against HCV.

70-79. (canceled)

80. (withdrawn -- currently amended): A method of producing the cell line of claim ~~77~~ 92, the method comprising:

transfecting a cell with ~~a vector that expresses a virus-like particle comprising a first HBsAg and a chimeric antigen, wherein the chimeric antigen comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:7 or an amino acid sequence having at least about 90% sequence identity thereto~~ pCMV-II-E2661-sAg (SEQ ID NO:6), and wherein the first and the second HBsAg each comprise a substantially complete S domain and said antigen

~~comprises a native HCV epitope and is capable of eliciting an immunological response against HCV; and~~

culturing the cell to produce a cell line that expresses the virus-like particles.

81. (canceled)

82. (canceled)

83. (withdrawn -- currently amended): A method of producing a virus-like particle comprising the steps of:

culturing a cell of the cell line of claim ~~77~~ 92 in a culture medium and
isolating the virus-like particle from the culture medium.

84. (withdrawn): The method of claim 83, wherein the cell is a CHO cell or a COS cell.

85-87. (canceled)

88. (currently amended): A vector comprising a first nucleic acid sequence which encodes a first HBsAg and a second nucleic acid sequence comprising the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:6, or a nucleotide sequence having at least about 90% sequence identity to the sequence of SEQ ID NO:6, wherein the first and the second HBsAg nucleic acid sequences each comprise a substantially complete S domain, wherein said vector is capable of expressing a fusion protein that comprises a native HCV epitope and elicits an immunological response against HCV.

89-91. (canceled)

92. (currently amended): A cell line that expresses a virus-like particle comprising a first HBsAg and a chimeric antigen which comprises a second HBsAg, wherein the chimeric antigen is encoded by a vector comprising the nucleotide sequence

of SEQ ID NO:6 or a sequence having at least about 90% sequence identity thereto, and wherein the first and the second HBsAg each comprise a substantially complete S domain, wherein said antigen comprises a native HCV epitope and is capable of eliciting an immunological response against HCV.